Handbook of Sexuality-Related Measures

Exhibit

Double Standard Scale

Instructions: Please circle your response to the following questions regarding your attitudes about the sex roles of men and women. Please keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers. Please answer honestly.

1 = Strongly Agree
2 = Agree
3 = Undecided
4 = Disagree
5 = Strongly Disagree

1 2 3 4 5  1. It is expected that a woman be less sexually experienced than her partner.
1 2 3 4 5  2. A woman who is sexually active is less likely to be considered a desirable partner.
1 2 3 4 5  3. A woman should never appear to be prepared for a sexual encounter.
1 2 3 4 5  4. It is important that the men be sexually experienced so as to teach the women.
1 2 3 4 5  5. A “good” woman would never have a one-night stand, but it is expected of a man.
1 2 3 4 5  6. It is important for a man to have multiple sexual experiences in order to gain experience.
1 2 3 4 5  7. In sex the man should take the dominant role and the woman should assume the passive role.
1 2 3 4 5  8. It is acceptable for a woman to carry condoms.
1 2 3 4 5  9. It is worse for a woman to sleep around than it is for a man.
1 2 3 4 5  10. It is up to the man to initiate sex.

Indicators of a Double Standard and Generational Difference in Sexual Attitudes

ILSA L. LOTTES, University of Maryland, Baltimore County
 MARTIN S. WEINBERG, Indiana University

Description

The Indicators of a Double Standard and Generational Difference in Sexual Attitudes were developed by Weinberg as part of a 1992 comparative study of sexual attitudes and behaviors of university students in the United States and Sweden. Compared to the United States, Sweden is considered a much more homogeneous society and the double standard of sexuality is also thought to be less evident in Sweden (see Reiss, 1980; Weinberg, Lottes, & Shaver, 1995). Thus, the Indicators were used to test these expectations. In general, the Indicators can be used to assess the perceived heterogeneity of sexual attitudes of a population by generation and gender or to compare two or more populations with respect to such generational and gender differences.

The Indicators of sexual attitudes consist of six 5-point Likert-type items. For each item, respondents compare their sexual attitudes to those of their mother, father, close female friends, close male friends, female students their own age, and male students their own age. The response options for each item are that the specified individual(s) is (are) much more liberal (1), slightly more liberal (2), the same (3), slightly more conservative (4), or much more conservative (5). Because the evaluation of parent and peer sexual attitudes is provided by respondents, not respondents’ parents and peers, this instrument should be regarded as providing indirect measures of a lack of homogeneity—a perception of a double standard and/or a generational difference in sexual attitudes. When evaluating a double standard of sexual behavior, researchers often ask the same respondents identical questions about...
acceptable sexual behavior for women and men. These types of questions make it obvious to respondents that female/male comparisons may be made, and respondents influenced by “social desirability” and “political correctness” pressures may be careful to put the same response to corresponding pairs of female/male questions. We believe that the wording of items of the Indicators make such a social desirability bias less likely because it is less obvious that comparisons to assess a double standard will be made. The Indicators of sexual attitudes would be appropriate to administer to high school or university students.

Response Mode and Timing

Respondents circle the number from (1) to (5) corresponding to their rating of the similarity of their sexual attitudes to those of their parent or peer group. This takes less than 5 minutes to complete.

Scoring

In a society characterized by the traditional double standard of sexual behavior, men are subjected to more permissive or liberal sexual norms than women. In such a society we would expect the sexual attitudes of men to be more liberal than the sexual attitudes of women. In operationalizing the double standard, we assume that if sexual attitudes of women and men are judged to be similar with respect to a liberal/conservative dimension, then this will indicate lack of support for a double standard. If the sexual attitudes of men are judged to be more liberal than women, then this will indicate a male-permissive double standard; similarly, if the attitudes of women are judged to be more liberal than men, then this will indicate a female-permissive double standard.

For ease of interpretation and also to identify the extent of more substantial or “real” generational and gender differences in sexual attitudes, responses to the six items were recoded as follows: 1 to –1, 2 to 0, 3 to 0, 4 to 0, and 5 to 1. With this coding, a minus one indicates that a respondent rated a parent or peer group to have sexual attitudes much more liberal than his/her own attitudes and a plus one indicates that a respondent rated a parent or peer group to have sexual attitudes much more conservative than his/her own attitudes. A zero indicates that a respondent rated a parent or peer group to have sexual attitudes similar to his/her own attitudes. A positive difference variable indicates a similar rating of sexual attitudes for a pair of female/male variables and is interpreted as an indicator of egalitarian sexual attitudes and no double standard. A negative difference (of –1 or –2) indicates that women’s sexual attitudes were rated more liberal than those of men—a female-permissive double standard. A positive difference (of 1 or 2) indicates that men’s sexual attitudes were rated more liberal than those of women—an indicator of a male-permissive double standard.

Reliability

Principal components factor analyses were performed on the six items using all five of the original responses with samples of male and female university students in the United States and Sweden. Factor analyses for each of the four country/gender groups revealed two factors—a parental factor composed of the mother and father items and a peer factor composed of the four friend and student items. For samples of male university students in the United States and Sweden, Cronbach alphas for the parental factor were .60 and .80, respectively; for these samples, Cronbach alphas for the peer factor were .85 and .84, respectively. For samples of female university students in the United States and Sweden, Cronbach alphas for the parental factor were .64 and .77, respectively; for these samples, Cronbach alphas for the peer factor were both .78.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female variable</th>
<th>Male variable</th>
<th>Difference variable</th>
<th>Interpretation of difference variables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fmother</td>
<td>Mfather</td>
<td>Dparent</td>
<td>–1 1 –2 standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ffriend</td>
<td>Mfriend</td>
<td>Dfriend</td>
<td>–1 0 –1 standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fstudent</td>
<td>Mstudent</td>
<td>Dstudent</td>
<td>0 1 0 standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 1 0 standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0 –1 –1 standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 0 1 standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 –1 2 standard</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The difference variable equals the female variable minus the male variable.*
Validity

Construct validity of the Indicators of a Double Standard and Generational Difference in Sexual Attitudes was supported by significant differences in the predicted direction for groups of Swedish and American university students. Greater proportions of Swedish than American university students responded in the similar category. Between 77% and 89% of Swedish students rated their parents’ sexual attitudes as similar to their own compared to between 54% and 65% for American students. Thus, these findings support the view that with respect to sexual attitudes, Sweden is a more homogeneous society, characterized by less of a generational difference in such attitudes than the United States. With respect to parents’ sexual attitudes, the proportion rated much more conservative was higher than the proportion rated much more liberal (especially for Americans).

Between 80% and 94% of Swedish students rated their male peers as having sexual attitudes similar to their own compared to between 55% and 79% for American students. For comparison with male peers, there were higher homogeneity ratings for Sweden than for the United States, as expected. For ratings of male peer sexual attitudes, non-similar responses for each country and gender tended to occur in the much more liberal rather than much more conservative category. For comparisons with female peer sexual attitudes, similar responses were high for all four country/gender groups. Thus, with respect to comparisons with female peers, the expectation regarding greater homogeneity in Sweden was only partially supported. A greater proportion of Swedish women (88%) compared to American women (78%) rated female students their own age as having sexual attitudes similar to their own. But no greater homogeneity was found in ratings of close female friends. Over 90% of all country/gender groups rated the sexual attitudes of their close female friends as similar to their own.

For the mother-father comparison, a higher proportion of American males rated their mother as having much more conservative sexual attitudes than their father than rated their mother as having much more liberal attitudes than their father (27% vs. 10%). For the double standard variables involving gender differences for friends and students, all four country/gender groups reported a higher proportion of much more conservative female peers than much more liberal female peers. However, the ratings of much more conservative female peers and the difference between the much more conservative and much more liberal ratings were larger for the American students than for the Swedish students. These findings support the expectation that a male-permissive double standard of sexual behavior is more prevalent in the United States. Nevertheless, about three fourths of American students and over 90% of Swedish students gave similar evaluations of the sexual attitudes of male and female peers. Thus, only a minority of respondents in both countries (less than 10% in Sweden and about 25% in the United States) indicated perception of a male-permissive double standard of sexual attitudes.

References


Exhibit

Indicators of a Double Standard and Generational Difference in Sexual Attitudes

Directions: Circle the number that corresponds to your answer. Do you think the sexual attitudes of the following people are more liberal or conservative than your own?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theirs are:</th>
<th>Very liberal</th>
<th>Slightly liberal</th>
<th>The same</th>
<th>Slightly conservative</th>
<th>Very conservative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Mother</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Father</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Close female friends</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Close male friends</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Female students your own age</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Male students your own age</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>